Boston Medical Library
in the Francis A. Countway
Library of Medicine ~ *Boston*

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2011 with funding from
Open Knowledge Commons and Harvard Medical School

http://www.archive.org/details/misfortunesofmar1873roes

THE

MISFORTUNES OF MARY ROESLY;

OR

THE LOST ARM.

A TRUE STORY.

BY MARY ROESLY.

BOSTON:
W. L. DELAND, PRINTER, 22 CONGRESS STREET.
1873.

THE

MISFORTUNES OF MARY ROESLY;

OR,

THE LOST ARM.

A TRUE STORY.

BY MARY ROESLY.

BOSTON:
W. L. DELAND, PRINTER, 22 CONGRESS STREET.
1873.

18 Concord Square,

Boston, July 15, 1872.

The subject of this story is well known to me personally. I cannot judge of her accuracy in giving a detailed account of her surgical treatment, but I know Mary Roesly to be a truthful, good girl. She has been, and is, a great sufferer, and she has borne her trials very patiently and uncomplainingly. Her father and mother are very much straitened in their means; and without taking counsel of any one, I believe, Mary has written this little sketch of her experience, hoping to enlist the sympathies of the benevolent and add something to the resources of her family. She placed the narrative in my hands a day or two since, and, without her solicitation, I have appended to it these few words as a testimonial of her character.

HENRY WILLIAMS,

Mary Roesly.

Boston, Feb. 22, 1873.

Since this story was first put into print, the Roesly family have lost nearly everything they had in the world by the Great Fire. They lived in attic rooms on Summer Street, within a few doors of the corner of Kingston Street, and were very soon driven out of their home by the fire, escaping with only a few things, some of which were afterwards stolen from them. Though they have received kind aid from the Committee on Chardon Street, and from others who have interested themselves in behalf of the family, they still need a good many things which they have not the means to purchase, and they are well deserving of additional aid from the charitable.

H. WILLIAMS.

THE

MISFORTUNES OF MARY ROESLY;

OR,

THE LOST ARM.

In placing before a generous public this little book bearing the above title, it is my desire to speak in an impartial manner of each one of the physicians connected with the treatment of my arm after the unfortunate accident which befell me November 2, 1864, on the Boston and Maine Railroad, and to give a precise statement regarding my sufferings, to the best of my knowledge, with the assistance of my parents; and in the meantime to thank every person who is willing to extend to me the small compensation I desire to procure for this book, and thus in some measure alleviate my permanent misfortune — the loss of my right arm.

In company with my parents, on the afternoon of November 2, 1864, I was starting to go from Melrose to Boston, between 3 and 4 o'clock. The cars being some fifteen

minutes late — though this was unknown to me — upon reaching Melrose, simply came to a stop, and hardly gave the passengers time to get aboard. By a sudden start, as I had just mounted the car platform, I was instantly thrown under the car, and my arm was crushed at the elbow by the forward wheels, and but for the immediate assistance of my father, who drew me from my perilous position, I should undoubtedly have been killed. The train was stopped at once, and after I was placed in the car, every assistance was given me that the kind passengers could extend, and after my arm was carefully bound up, the conductor advised my father to take me to Malden as the nearest place to get it properly dressed. Unfortunately the doctor upon whom we called was absent from his office, and did not return until 9 o'clock in the evening. When he reached home he examined my arm and pronounced amputation necessary, which he performed that night.

After remaining four days at Malden, under the physician's care, I was transferred to the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, where, being examined, the surgeon pronounced a second amputation necessary, as the bone was mortifying from not being properly dressed at the first operation.

Five weeks after this operation another was deemed necessary, as the arm would not heal. Eight weeks later another amputation was made for the same cause.

Twelve weeks after this last operation, and on account of continual pain, I was again admitted into the hospital and submitted to another amputation on account of the bone's mortifying; and, as the flesh was slow in healing, I was detained in the hospital five months, after which I was permitted to return home; but still the arm continued to cause me incessant pain, and made me very often sick, — but yet no relief could be afforded me.

An artificial arm was given me by one of the kind physicians, but its weight caused the pain in my arm to increase and I was soon obliged to abandon it.

After trying several treatments under different surgeons, and no remedy staying my constant suffering, I again applied to the City Hospital for admittance which was granted, and I was so subject to fainting that my only nourishment was milk and lime water. Here, in the above-named hospital, I remained three months, — but still very weak from sickness I was sent home, and for five months I was a constant sufferer from feeble health.

In 1867 my arm again became so painful that it was impossible for me to sleep at night or during the day, and my

first attending physician at the General Hospital told me that nothing was the matter that he could see, but my arm continued so painful I was obliged to go to the City Hospital in February, 1869, and the doctor there told me that the arm was dislocated at the shoulder, and in order to cure me it would be necessary to amputate the remaining part of the limb by taking it from the socket at the shoulder.

At first I hesitated about the operation — for to lose the entire arm is indeed a great misfortune — but I could only think of my intense sufferings, consequently I consented to have the *last* operation performed. So after being placed in a partially insensible condition from the effects of ether, the bone was removed, and with it six little tumors; and, although the pain was torturing, I never uttered a cry or showed any signs of distress, which somewhat astonished the physicians and students who saw the operation.

On the first of April, 1870, the doctor sent me to my home, and as the shoulder gave no signs of healing I visited one of the hospital surgeons at his house, who, after examining the shoulder, said it would not heal, because in uniting the flesh after the bone was removed the raw flesh was placed over the skin opposite and could not possibly unite any more than placing the two hands together.

On the first of May following, another operation of the

shoulder flesh was necessary, in order that it might be properly placed in a position to heal; and though I think I may say I stood this operation with some fortitude, as it elicited the remark from several physicians that I was "courageous," yet the reader will understand that such remarks are generally made to render the sometimes timid brave, but my *silent* sufferings were terrible to me. During the three weeks that I remained in the hospital my arm began to heal and pain me, and at times it would almost break my heart, yet still I hoped for relief as time passed on. But as hopes availed nothing I again visited the surgeon who performed the last operation. The encouragement he gave me was that the only method left for treatment, was to cut off the protruding flesh and leave the shoulder open, and yet the operation was of so serious a nature that death might ensue, therefore that surgeon did not dare to proceed on *my* account; finally he resorted to ice-bags (so-called); but, more definitely explained, they were little bags filled with ice and placed on my back near the shoulder of the lost arm. This treatment relieved me a great deal from pain; but soon, in spite of it, the pain began anew, and blisters were applied, but to no effect. Morphine was then rubbed over the shoulder, and my medicine was iodine — but still the pain continued; and four

months I remained in the hospital suffering intensely from my ailment, and in this condition I was sent home.

Again, in December, I returned and was subjected to the severe treatment of having four holes burnt in my back with a hot iron; this was done to keep the flesh open, but to no effect, and in one week's time they closed, and the pain commenced again; and from the time of my accident to the present day no comfort have I received from the hands of any physician, although they probably have done all they can to give me relief. And through the introduction of this little book it is my desire to get some assistance, independent of my parents, who have neither spared expense nor care in procuring for me the comforts I have thus far enjoyed.

To all young girls who are blessed with both arms my thoughts go forth, "how fortunate;" and in closing my little work I sincerely trust that no accident, no matter of how light a character, will ever befall any of my fortunate friends — and again the girl of the lost arm breathes a fervent "God bless you," and a grateful good-bye.

COUNTWAY LIBRARY OF MEDICINE
RD
557
R62
1873
RARE BOOKS DEPARTMENT